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The New Sydenham

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SIR, I have been requested by the Sydenham Society to seek your aid in the case of those of your readers who are not interested in our past history, present condition, and future prospects. We are now in the middle of our twenty-third financial year dating from January 1863, our financial year ending in June, and our contributions being due in advance, and our year (from June to June). Our twenty-eighth year begins this month, and the first volume of our new series of distribution to our members. It consists of essays and papers, chiefly from German sources, on "Micro-parasites to Disease," and "The course of a month by the twelfth part of Medical Terms." We commence this year, and the present is therefore an excellent opportunity for members to join us. The hope of doing so is, let me say at once, my motive in writing this letter.

During our twenty-eight years of work, our income varying from £2000 to £3500, and our list which has averaged 3000. Of some of our works—such, for instance, as Trousseau's "Leçons cliniques," we have been the means of sending abroad, in all parts of the world, not fewer than 100,000 copies. The volume which is now going out contains an average of considerably more than 1000 pages. I must explain that in this country we have issued six volumes, whilst on three occasions last year, we have been obliged, by the smallness of our list, to issue only three. The two other volumes were 1863 and 1865. When I issued "General Pathology," and that we have "General Pathology," and more recently "Lexicon of Medical Terms," I think I can claim that we have achieved a very considerable success. The maintenance of such a membership for a series of years, proves that our efforts to

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A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE LANCET.

SIR,

I have been requested by the Council of the New Sydenham Society to seek your aid in bringing under the notice of those of your readers who are not its members a few facts as to our past history, present condition, and future prospects.

We are now in the middle of our twenty-eighth financial year (our financial year dating from January to December, subscriptions being due in advance, and our year of issue being from June to June). Our twenty eighth year of issue of books begins this month, and the first volume of the year is in course of distribution to our members. It consists of a volume of short essays and papers, chiefly from German sources, on the "Relations of Micro-parasites to Disease," and it will be followed in the course of a month by the twelfth part of our "Lexicon of Medical Terms." We commence this year several new works, and the present is therefore an excellent opportunity for new members to join us. The hope of inducing a large number to do so is, let me say at once, my motive in asking insertion for this letter.

During our twenty-eight years of work we have enjoyed an income varying from £2000 to £3500, and have had a members' list which has averaged 3000. Of some of our more important works—such, for instance, as Trousseau's "Clinical Medicine"—we have been the means of sending abroad amongst the profession, in all parts of the world, not fewer than 4000 copies. The volume which is now going out counts as our 115th, which gives an average of considerably more than four volumes to each year. I must explain that in this calculation the parts of our Lexicon, and the fasciculi of our two Atlases, count as volumes. In each of the three years, 1880, 1881, and 1882, we issued six volumes, whilst on three occasions, one of which was last year, we have been obliged, by the state of our funds, to be content with only three. The two other years when this happened were 1863 and 1865. When I add that we have but seldom issued thin volumes, that we have been liberal in woodcuts and lithographs, and that we have had constantly in hand a very expensive Atlas (first one of "Dermatology," and now one of "General Pathology,") and more recently a yet more expensive "Lexicon of Medical Terms," I think I shall have justified the claim that we have achieved a very considerable amount of success. The maintenance of such a members' list, through so long a series of years, proves that our efforts to provide sound medical

literature have been appreciated, and that in the main our publications have been approved.

Beginning with Dr. C. J. B. Williams, our first President, we have had in Sir Thomas Watson, Sir James Paget, Sir George Burrows, Mr. Cæsar Hawkins, Sir Prescott Hewett, Mr. Hilton, Dr. Peacock, Dr. Stokes, Sir W. Gull, Sir W. Bowman, and Sir Andrew Clark, a series of presidents who have all taken a vigorous interest in the Society's welfare. They have been constantly aided by members of the Council equally willing to devote time and labour to its interests. Of treasurers we have had but two. Up to the time of his death the duties of this post were discharged by the late Dr. Barlow; and for the last twenty years the Society has owed more than I can say to the alike able and indefatigable services of our present treasurer, Dr. Sedgwick Saunders. In its management, the Society has always aimed carefully at economy. Its expenses under the head of "Depôt," including agent's salary, distribution of books, and advertisements, have seldom been so much as a fifth part of the income, and often not a sixth. Our local secretaries have always given their valuable services gratuitously; and those services have, I know, often been very laborious.

I now come to the point to which I am especially desirous to ask general attention. It is this: that the Society is an organisation for the mutual advantage of its members; and that not only is its scope enlarged by increase of members, but that it gains directly in its capabilities of usefulness. With a small members' list, only a small series of books for the year can be issued; and with a larger one, that annual number is at once increased. It is, therefore, the direct interest of all members to endeavour to enlist others. When once the type for a book is set up, or the stone prepared for a plate, it costs very little to print off an extra thousand. If our members' list could be kept permanently at about four thousand, we could issue six volumes regularly every year with ease. I feel sure that this number might without difficulty be attained if once its desirability were widely recognised. In the hope of offering attractions to those who have not joined us, permit me to enter into a little detail as to the works which we have now in preparation.

Our "Lexicon of Medical Terms," under the editorship of Mr. Power and Dr. Sedgwick, has now advanced fully half-way to completion, and its editors promise us to finish it in four years. I hesitate not to assert that, when finished, it will be, for completeness and conciseness, without its equal in any language. The two large volumes to which it has already attained extend to the letter H, and constitute, even as they are, a most valuable addition to the practitioner's library. New subscribers will be allowed to procure these two volumes as the equivalents of two years' subscription.

Of our "Atlas of Pathology," a sixth fasciculus is now nearly

ready, and, should our funds permit of it, others, which are in preparation, will be regularly issued.

The "Atlas of Skin Disease" we regard as complete, and no more fasciculi of it will be brought out. It is out of print, and most of the stones have been destroyed.

The council has come to the conclusion that, for the present at least, it will consider the issue of reprints of English authors concluded. It believes that the great activity of research which characterises the present day renders, as regards the larger number of its members, translations of recent publications more acceptable, and perhaps more useful, than reprints of the classics of the past. The same statement applies to collections of the scattered publications of recently deceased British writers. Our New Sydenham library, under these two classes, contains reprints from the works of Gooch, Bright, Addison, Latham, Smellie, Colles, Stokes, Graves, and Warburton Begbie. Although I believe that all of these were well worthy the Society's adoption, and were very acceptable when issued, yet I also quite think that the Council has acted wisely in deciding to devote all available funds in future to translations of recent books, and to the completion of our "Pathological Atlas" and "Medical Lexicon."

In reference to the observation sometimes made that it is better to read foreign works in their original tongue, I may ask attention to the fact that some of the Society's books are by no means mere translations. The volume of Billroth's "Clinical Surgery," prepared for us under the editorship of Mr. Clinton Dent, comprises the cream of many separate books and reports, not very easy of access. It would be a boon to the German profession if, in its present form, our book was translated back into that language. The same remark applies to Dr. Vivian Poore's single-volume edition of the very able, but very diffuse, publications of the late Dr. Duchenne of Boulogne. Every member of our Society possesses a far better compendium of Duchenne's works than any which the author's fellow-countrymen can possibly procure in their own tongue. A volume of the same class is in preparation, to comprise the most valuable parts of Alfred Fournier's writings, and the work on Micro-parasites, just edited for us by Mr. Watson Cheyne, may claim something of the same character. Our two volumes of German "Clinical Lectures" were also carefully selected, and gave to our readers the best of the voluminous series which appeared in the original.

Of the works on which translators for the Society are now actually engaged, I may mention the following:—Hirsch's "Manual of Geographical Pathology" (Dr. Creighton); a third volume will conclude this work. Cohnheim's "General Pathology" (Dr. McKee). Spiegelberg's "Midwifery" (Dr. Hurry), undertaken on the strong recommendation of

Dr. Matthews Duncan, Dr. Barnes, Dr. Herman, and others. This work is a large and freely illustrated manual of the subject, which has attained great popularity abroad. Dr. Barlow has in hand for us the original essays of Dr. Raynaud on the disease which is likely in the future to bear his name, and Dr. Fancourt Barnes has translated Neugebauer's monographs. Another volume of Charcot's "Clinical Lectures" (not as yet quite complete in the original) has been adopted, as have also the works of Flugge on Micro-parasites, Litzmann on Contracted Pelvis, and Bandl's two short monographs on special subjects in connection with pregnancy and labour. A third volume of German "Clinical Lectures" is contemplated, and many other works have only been put aside by the Council because it cannot see its way to the probability of being able to afford to issue them within a reasonable period. There is no lack of works in foreign languages the reproduction of which in English would be a direct and great boon to professional knowledge amongst ourselves. No machinery can possibly be devised better fitted for the production of such works than a mutual translation company, such as is our Society. The works which we publish cost our members certainly less than half of what they would do if purchased through the trade. The recent remarkable cheapening of medical works has, I have no doubt, to some extent conflicted with our interests. It is, however, a fact on which we congratulate ourselves, partly because we believe that what we have done has had a share in bringing about the reformation, and in part because it helps to attain the end which the Society seeks. When, however, medical publishers have done the utmost that enterprise can attempt, we still feel that there will be abundant room for our Society's special function. In that belief, on behalf of the Council, I now appeal to the English-speaking profession all over the world to come forward and recruit our ranks. We have no formalities of election, and all who send their names and subscriptions are enrolled at once. Those who may possibly feel, respecting some of our works, that they do not personally wish to possess them, may yet have the satisfaction of knowing that they are helping the success of a Society which has in the past done much honest work in the cause of medicine and which trusts to be enabled in the future to do much more.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

JONATHAN HUTCHINSON,

Hon. Secretary, New Sydenham Society.

15 Cavendish Square, W., June, 1886.

Mr. H. K. Lewis, 136 Gower Street, London, is the Society's Agent, to whom subscriptions should be paid, and from whom any further information may be obtained.

